

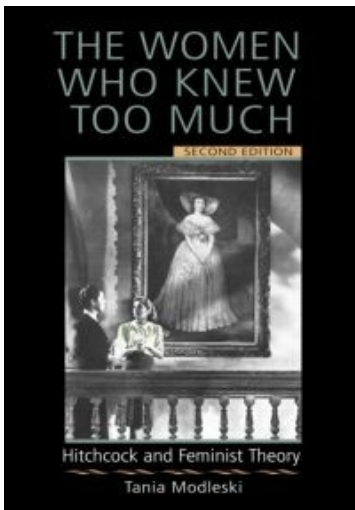


Tania Modleski (1941 -)



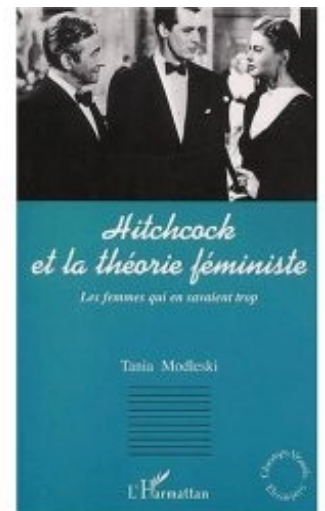
Alfred Hitchcock (1899 -1980)

Tania Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much : Hitchcock and Feminist Theory*



Tania Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much : Hitchcock and Feminist Theory*, New York: Routledge, Chapman & Hall, 1988.

Tania Modleski, *Hitchcock et la théorie féministe: Les femmes qui en savaient trop*, trad. Par XX, Paris: L'Harmattan, collection « Champs Visuels Etrangers », 2002.



The seven films under Tania Modleski's critical eye : *Blackmail* (Chantage) – 1929; *Murder* (Meurtres) – 1930; *Rebecca* – 1940; *Notorious* (Les Enchaînés) – 1946; *Rear Window* (Fenêtre sur cour) – 1954; *Vertigo* (Sueurs froides) – 1958; *Frenzy* – 1972.

Introduction

► « “Hitchcock betrays a **resemblance** to one of his favorite character types – the **person who exerts an influence from beyond the grave**” (1).

► « **Hithcock's great need** (exhibited throughout his life as well in his death) to insist on and **exert authorial control** may be related to the fact that **his films are always in danger of being subverted by females** whose power is both fascinating and seemingly limitless. » (1)

► « **[I]dentification on the part of women at the cinema is much more complicated than feminist theory has understood** : far from being masochistic, the **female spectator is always**

caught up in a double desire, identifying at one and the same time **not only with the passive (female) object, but with the active (usually) male subject.** (2)

► «[O]ne of my **book's main theses** is that time and again in Hitchcock films, the strong **fascination and identification with femininity** revealed in them **subverts the claims to mastery and authority** not only in the **male characters** but of the **director** himself. (3)

► « But what I to want to argue is *neither that Hitchcock* is utterly **misogynist** *nor* that his work is largely **sympathetic to women** and their plight in patriarchy, but that his work is characterized by a **thoroughgoing ambivalence about femininity** » (3).

► « **[D]espite** the often considerable **violence** with which women are treated in Hitchcock's films, they **remain resistant to patriarchal assimilation.** » (3)

► « One of the problems with **Mulvey's theory** was that her **picture of male cinema** was so **monolithic** that she **made it seem invincible** » (9)

► « Moreover, I believe we *do need to destroy* « **man-centered vision** » by beginning to see **with our own eyes** – because for so long we have been not only **fixed in its sights**, but also **forced to view the world through its lens.** » (9)

► « [S]ome feminists have criticized **Mulvey's « inadequate theorization of the female spectator,** » others have objected to her **restriction of the male spectator to a single, dominant position,** arguing that **men at the movies** – at least at *some* movies – **may also be feminine, passive, and masochistic.** » (9)

► « As Hitchcock films repeatedly demonstrate, the **male subject** is greatly **threatened by bisexuality**, though he is at the same time **fascinated** by it; and it is the **woman who pays for this ambivalence** – often **with her life** itself. » (10)

► « [I]n **decisive moments** in the history of the subject, the **individual learns to take pleasure in pain and loss. Cinematic activity,** like many other forms of cultural activity, **replays these moments of loss,** which are **as pleasurable for the male as for the female spectator** ». (12)

► « “An **analysis of voyeurism and sexual difference** is only one of the ways in which a book taking a specifically **feminist approach** can provide a **much needed perspective on Hitchcock's films.** Indeed, there are **many questions** that I think begin to **look very different when seen by a woman**”. (14)

► « **Feminism, too, has by now its pieties and routines.** Insofar as it all too readily accepts the ideals of male semiotic systems, feminism **also needs to be challenged by a « frankly inventive » approach,** an approach that, if it seems **alien at first,** is so only because it is situated in the realm of the **uncanny – speaking with a voice that inhabits us all,** but that for some of us has been **made strange through fear and repression.** » (15)

Rebecca

(1940)

► **The enigma between mothers & daughters** : « Although in *Psycho* the mother/son relationship is paramount, I will argue that in films from *Rebecca* on it is more often the mother/daughter relationship that evokes this threat of identity and constitutes the main « problem » of [Hitchcock's] films. » (5)



► **Adaptation of a « feminine text »** : « Hitchcock's own dismissal of the film [*Rebecca*, based on Daphne du Maurier's novel (1939)¹] contains a definition of this term, 'novellettish': « Well, it's **not a Hitchcock picture**, » he remarked to Truffaut; « it's a **novellette**, really. The **story is old-fashioned**; there was a **whole school of feminine literature** at the period, and **though I'm not against it**, the fact is that the story is **lacking in humor**. »² (42)

► **« A woman's film »?** : « Selznick believed his production of *Rebecca* would appeal especially to women, whom he expected to identify strongly with the main character (« I know just how she feels; I know just what she's 'going through'»). His emphasis on the **female audience's potential to empathize** closely with the

heroine coincides with the culture's view [...] of women as closer to the (textual) body than men and thus ready to **surrender** themselves freely to the **fantasies** offered by the « **woman's film** »³. (44)

► **A female oedipal trajectory** : « [A]ll Hollywood narratives are **dramatizations** of the male oedipal story, of man's entry into the social and Symbolic order »⁴ [...] I do, however, maintain that all kinds of **interesting differences** arise when a film features a **woman's trajectory** and directly **solicits the interest** of a female audience. Besides [...] do not believe in the assimilation of femininity by **patriarchy can ever be complete**. My own analysis is dedicated to **tracing the resistances that disturb the text**. » (45)

► **The undead rival** : « *Rebecca* is the story of a **woman's maturation**, a woman who must come to terms with a **powerful father figure** and **assorted mother substitutes** (Mrs. Van Hopper, Rebecca, and Mrs. Danvers). That *Rebecca* is an **oedipal drama** from the **feminine point of view** has been noticed by Raymond Durnat : « For the heroine fulfills the **archetypal female Oedipal dream** of marrying the father-figure, who has rescued her from the **tyranny of the domineering old woman** (i.e. **mother**). But in doing so she has to **confront the rival from the past**, the woman who possessed her father first, who can reach out and possess him once again. »⁵ (46)

► **What does Maxim de Winter want?** : « Feminist critics have noted [...] the **conflicting attitude towards the female** expressed in **film noir**: on the one hand, the **domestic woman** is sexually **nonthreatening**, but she is **boring**; on the other hand, the *femme fatale* is **exciting**, but **dangerous**. From the woman's point of view, then, **man becomes an enigma**, his desire

1 Le film *The Birds* (1963) de Hitchcock est également inspiré d'une des nouvelles de Daphne du Maurier.

2 François Truffaut, *Hitchcock*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983, p. 127.

3 Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940's*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.

4 According to the French film theorist Raymond Bellour.

5 Raymond Durnat, *The Strange Case of Alfred Hitchcock, or the Plain Man's Hitchcock*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1974, p. 168.

difficult to know. Although women have not had the chance to articulate the problem as directly as men have, they could easily ask Freud's question of the opposite sex: **what is it men want?** » (50)

► **The desire of women for other women** : « Freud himself was forced to reject the notion of an **Electra Complex**, according to which the **young girl** experiences her **mother** primarily as an **object of rivalry**, and to admit the **importance** of the **young girl's early desire** for her **mother**.⁶ Moreover, he recognized how frequently this desire **persists throughout the woman's life, influencing her heterosexual relationships**, as well as her **relationships with other women**. In *Rebecca*, the heroine continually strives not only to please **Maxim**, but to win the affections of **Mrs. Danvers**, who seems herself to be possessed, haunted by Rebecca and to have a sexual attachment to the dead woman. Finally, it becomes obvious that the **two desires cannot coexist**: the desire for the mother impedes the progress of the heterosexual union. Ultimately, then the heroine disavows her desire for the mother, affirming her primary attachment to the male. [...] Finally, there is nothing left for the heroine but to **desire to kill the mother off**, a desire which [...] entails **killing part of herself**, for she cannot, like the male, project the woman as « other », « as difference », thereby seeming to establish a secure sense of her own identity. » (51-52)

► **The conspicuous absence of Rebecca** : In *Rebecca*, however, the **sexual woman is never seen**, although her presence is **strongly evoked** throughout the film, and so it is **impossible** for any man to **gain control over her** in the usual classical narrative fashion. [...] In her discussion of the system, Kaja Silverman notes, « Classic cinema abounds in shot/reverse shot formations in which men look at women. »⁷ [...] But in *Rebecca* the beautiful, desirable woman is not only **never sutured in as object of the look**, not only **never made a part of the film's field of vision**, she is actually **posited within the diegesis as all-seeing** » (52).

► **The identity labyrinth** : « [In *Rebecca*] Hitchcock found one of his « proper » subjects – the potential **terror and loss of self involved in identification**, especially **identification with a woman**. / *Rebecca* thus provides one final **ironic instance** of the notion that the **feminine is that which subverts identity** – in this case, the **identity of the auteur, the Master of the labyrinth himself**. » (55)

Rear Window

(1940)

► **Negation of woman's view** : « According to Mulvey, both *Rear Window* (1954) and *Vertigo* (1958) are films « **cut to the measure of male desire** » - **tailored**, that is, to the **fears and fantasies of the male spectator**, who, because of the **threat of castration** posed by the **woman's image**, needs to **see her fetishized and controlled** in the course of the **narrative**. »⁸ (73)



► **Metacinematic commentary** : « [S]pectators identifying with the chair-bound, **voyeuristic protagonist** find themselves in **complicity** with [L. B. Jeffries's] **guilty desires**. Because of **Hitchcock's relentless insistence on the male gaze**, even critics like Robin Wood, who are anxious to save the film for feminism, restrict themselves to discussing the film's critique of the **position**

6 Sigmund Freud, « Femininity, » *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, New York: Norton, 1965, pp. 105-7.

7 Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1983, p. 225.

8 Laura Mulvey, « Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema, » *Screen* 16, no. 3 (1975), p. 17.

of the hero and, by extension, of the male spectator whose « phantasy position the hero occupies »⁹(73).

► **Just another Deeping Tom?**: « A number of critics [...] have pointed out that the film's protagonist is fixated at an infantile level of sexual development and must in the course of the narrative grow into « mature sexuality » : Jeffries's voyerism goes hand in hand with an absorbing fear of mature sexuality. » (75)

► **The fantasy of the fragmented female body**: « [A]s the narrative proceeds, the sexuality of the woman, which is all along presented as threatening, is first combated by the fantasy of female dismemberment and then, finally, by a re-membling of the woman according to the little boy's fantasy that the female is no different from himself. » (76)

► **A perfect & busy princess**: « Lisa Freemont is anything but helpless and incapable, despite Mulvey's characterization of her as a « passive image of visual perfection - and this is where the « problem » lies. (76) (« [T]he woman is continually shown to be physically superior to the hero, not only in physical movements but also in her dominance within the frame », 77).

► **Powerful parallelisms**: Important parallels are [...] set up between Lisa and Thorwald, on the one hand, and Jeff and the [murdered] wife, on the other » (77) ; « Jeff and Anna Tornwald as mirror images » (82).

► **Dressing & gazing**: « Given this emphasis on the woman's mobility, freedom and power, it seems odd that an astute critic like Mulvey sees in the image of Lisa Freemont only a passive object of the male gaze. Mulvey bases her judgment on the fact that Lisa appears to be « obsessed with dress and style, » continually putting herself on visual display for Jeff » (77)

► **The dollhouse or split screen effect**: « Just as the cinema, in its resemblance to the mirror at the mirror stage, offers the viewer an image of wholeness and plenitude, so too does the dollhouse world of the apartment buildings Jeff watches » (79).

► « On the one hand, then, there is the anticipation of bodily « perfection » and unity which is, importantly, first promised by the body of the woman; on the other hand, the fantasy of dismemberment, a fantasy that gets disavowed by projecting it into the body of the woman, who, in an interpretation which reverses the state of affairs the male child most fears, eventually becomes to be perceived as castrated, mutilated, 'imperfect'. » (80)

► **Fear of the Gothic marriage plot**: « [Hitchcock's] continual reworking of the « female Gothic » - « wedlock is deadlock » (82).

► **« Feminine » spectatorship**: « Suspense », Truffaut has claimed, « is simply the dramatization of a film's narrative material, or, if you will, the most intense presentation possible of dramatic situations »; suspense is not « a minor form of the spectacle, » but « the spectacle in itself ». Granted this equivalence between suspense and « the spectacle » , the narrative, might we not then say that spectatorship and « narrativity » are themselves « feminine » (to the male psyche) in that they place the spectator in a passive position and in a submissive relation to the text? (83)

► « Thornwald proceeds to complete the « feminization » process by crossing over to Jeff's apartment and placing Jeff in the role previously played by Mrs. Thornwald and then by Lisa - that of victim to male violence. Jeff's « distancing » techniques, of course, no longer work, and the flashing bulbs only manage to slow Thorwald down a bit. Like Lisa, Jeff finally becomes a participant in his story, though his identification with the female character is involuntary. Imposed on him by Thornwald, whose visit comes like the return of the

9 Robin Wood, « Fear of Spying », *American Film*, Nov 1982, p. 31-32.

repressed. » (83-84).

► **Analogy between cinema and « woman »** : « [T]he film's ending and its « narrative image » of Lisa in masculine drag reveals the way in which acceptable femininity is a construct of male narcissistic desire, despite Freud's claim that women tend to be more narcissistic than men, who supposedly possess a greater capacity for object love. The film has consistently shown the opposite state of affairs to be the case, and in particular has revealed Jeff to be unable to care for Lisa except insofar as she affirms and mirrors him : significantly, he becomes erotically attracted to her only when she begins to corroborate his interpretation of the world around him » (84) ; « One of the most highly reflexive of films, *Rear Window* indicates that what Jean-Louis Baudry has argued to be characteristic of the cinematic apparatus as a whole – and in particular of *projection* – is also true at the level of narrative, which functions as masculine fantasy projected onto the body of a woman.¹⁰ » (84).

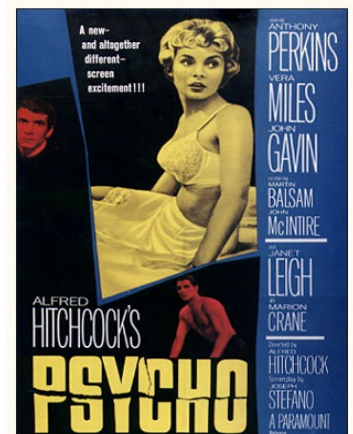
► **Lisa's last look** : « We are left with the suspicion (a preview, perhaps, of coming attractions) that while men sleep and dream their dreams of omnipotence over a safely reduced world, women are not where they appear to be, locked into male « views » of them, imprisoned in their master's dollhouse. » (85)

Psycho (1960)

► **Hitch and the slashed gender** : « Some critics have even argued that Hitchcock's work is prototypical of the extremely violent assaults on women that make up so much of our entertainment today. Thus, Linda Williams has claimed that *Psycho* is the forerunner of the slasher films of the 1970s and 1980s. » (17)

► **The inevitable psychic movie experience** : « I have never really not been discussing *Psycho* – to my mind, the quintessential horror film. » (102)

► **The ultimate encounter with the « mother »** : « [F]ear of the devouring, voracious mother is central in much of Hitchcock's work, even where it is not immediately apparent. By « voracious », I refer to the continual threat of annihilation, of swallowing up, the mother poses to the personality and identity of the protagonists. Far from being the mere gimmick criticism has tended to consider it, the mother's psychic obliteration of her child in *Psycho* is paradigmatic of the fear haunting many Hitchcock films, at least since *Rebecca*. Julia Kristeva has theorized that such a threat constitutes the very « powers of horror ». In Kristeva's account, phobia and the phobic aspects of religion are all ultimately linked to matrophobia and are concerned with warding off the danger of contact with the mother : « This is precisely where we encounter the rituals of defilement... which, based on the feeling of abjection and all converging on the maternal, attempt to symbolize the other threat to the subject : that of being swamped by the dual relationship, thereby risking the loss not of a part (castration) but of the totality of his living being. The function of these religious rituals is to ward off the subject's fear of his very own identity sinking irretrievably into the mother. »¹¹ (107)



10 Jean-Louis Baudry, « Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus », *Apparatus : Cinematographic Apparatus : Selected Writings*, ed. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, New York: Tanam, 1980, p. 29.

11 Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.

► **Hitchcock's catholicisms** : « « It is a commonplace, at least since Rohmer and Chabrol's study¹², to consider Hitchcock a Catholic director, especially insofar as he is concerned with the themes of guilt and original sin. It seems to be possible to deepen this insight of the religious nature of Hitchcock's work, endeavoring to get beyond the platitudinous in order to understand the strong hold Hitchcock has had on the public imagination right up to the present day. Thus we may speculate that Hitchcock films enact « rituals of defilement », evoking and then containing the fear of women that lies at the heart of these rituals. » (107-108).

► **Hitchcock's clairvoyant cannibalisms** : « Hitchcock's fear and loathing of women is accompanied by a lucid understanding of – and even sympathy for – women's problems in patriarchy. This apparent contradiction is attributable to his profound ambivalence about femininity, ambivalence which, in *Frenzy*, reaches an extreme form that I have accounted for psychoanalytically by analysis of the cannibalism motif. In Freudian theory, as we have seen, the individual at the cannibalistic stage wants to destroy the object by devouring it, but he also wishes to preserve it and to assimilate it. [...] I do mean to insist on the importance of the fact that woman is never completely destroyed in these films – no matter how dead Hitchcock tries to make her appear, as when he inserts still shots in both *Psycho* and *Frenzy* of the female corpse. There are always elements resistant to her destruction and assimilation. [...] Even more importantly, the film links the sexual violence it depicts to a system of male dominance rather than confining it to the inexplicable behaviour of one lone psychopath » (112).

► « In contrast to *Psycho*, which in promotions and in the film itself had titillated spectators with hopes of seeing Janet Leigh's breasts but which had withheld the full sight of the desired objects, *Frenzy* shows an extreme closeup of the woman's breast as she struggles to pull her bra back over it, all the while murmuring the words of a psalm. It is all anything but lovely; it is infinitely sad, pathetic, among the most disturbing scenes cinema has to offer. » (113)

Afterword

► « Feminist criticism has frequently tended to see only one aspect of female spectatorship – either the complicity or the resistance; I have argued throughout this book, however, that woman's response is complex and contradictory and requires an understanding of woman's placement on the margins of patriarchal culture – at once inside and outside its codes and structures. » (116-117)

► **Dialectics of male desire** : « On more than one occasion, I have quoted Jean-Paul Sartre, whose work seems to me to capture more than that of any other thinker the impossible dialectics of [male] desire. In a passage that could stand as the epigraph for many of Hitchcock's films, Sartre writes, '[T]he lover's dream is to identify the beloved object with himself and still preserve for it its own individuality : let the Other become me without ceasing to be the other. To know [the body of the other] is to devour it yet without consuming it. »¹³ (117)

► **Risking the punishment** : « If women in Hitchcock texts are routinely punished for their refusal to acknowledge male authority [...] such acknowledgment only leads to a « symbolic murder » of woman as woman, as other. If, then, we would seek to prevent being absorbed by male authority and male texts, we must risk punishment and withhold the authorial acknowledgment the texts exact. Feminist critics must refuse to bow before the camera's "terrifying power" and, instead, affirm the theatrical, "treacherous" aspects of these

12 Eric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol, Hitchcock: *The First Forty-Four Films*, New York: Ungar, 1979.

13 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, New York: Washington Square, 1966, p. 10.

“seductive” texts – those parts which **“know” more than their author**, those moments I have stressed here **when woman resists capitulation** to male power and male designs.” (119)

► **“Such knowledge, putting the blame for crimes against women where it belongs, is available everywhere in the Hitchcock text if one cares to look; it has been the task of my study simply to place this knowledge more securely than ever in the possession of women.”** (121)



Laura Mulvey, « Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema » (1975)¹⁴

► **Hollywood cinema**

- « The **magic of the Hollywood style** [...] arose, not exclusively, but in one important aspect, from its **skilled and satisfying manipulation of visual pleasure**. Unchallenged, **mainstream film coded the erotic into the language of the dominant patriarchal order**. »

► **The Pleasure of Looking in the Cinema**

- « The **cinema** offers a number of possible **pleasures**. One is **scopophilia**. [...] **conditions of screening and narrative conventions** give the spectator an **illusion of looking in on a private world**. Among other things, the **position of the spectators** in the cinema is blatantly **one of repression** of their **exhibitionism** and **projection of the repressed desire** on to the **performer**. »[...] The **cinema** satisfies a **primordial wish for pleasurable looking**, but is also goes further, **developing scopophilia in its narcissistic aspect**. »

► **Identification with the Image**

- « Jacques **Lacan** has described how the moment when a **child recognises its own image** in the **mirror** is crucial for the **constitution of the ego**. [...] it is an **image** that constitutes the **matrix of the imaginary**, of **recognition/misrecognition** and **identification**, and hence of the **first articulation** of the 'I' of **subjectivity**. [...] Quite apart from the extraneous similarities between **screen** and **mirror** [...], the **cinema** has **structures of fascination** strong enough to allow **temporary loss of ego** while simultaneously **reinforcing the ego**. »

► **Woman as Image, Man as Bearer of the Look**

- « **Woman's desire** is subjugated to her **image as bearer of the bleeding wound**; she can **exist only** in relation to **castration** and **cannot transcend it**. [...] **Woman** then stands in patriarchal culture as a **signifier for the male other**, bound by a symbolic order in which **man can live out his fantasies and obsessions** through **linguistic command** by imposing them on the **silent image of woman** still tied to her place of **bearer, not maker, of meaning**. »

- « The **presence of woman** is an **indispensable element of spectacle in normal narrative film**, yet her **visual presence** tends to work against the development of a story line, to **freeze the flow of action** in moments of **erotic contemplation**. This **alien presence** then **has to be integrated** into cohesion with the **narrative**. » As **Budd Boetticher** has put it: "**What counts is what the heroine provokes, or rather what she represents**. She is the one, or rather the love or fear she inspires in the hero, or else the concern he feels for her, who

¹⁴ Article publié d'abord dans *Screen*, vol. 16, n° 3, automne 1975, avant d'être réédité dans de nombreuses anthologies ou collections d'articles, telles que *The Feminism and Visual Cultural Reader*, ed. Amelia Jones, New York : Routledge, 2003, p. 44-53.

Essai téléchargeable : <https://wiki.brown.edu/confluence/display/MarkTribe/Visual+Pleasure+and+Narrative+Cinema>

makes him act the way he does. **In herself the woman has not the slightest importance.** »

- « A **woman performs** within the narrative, **the gaze of the spectator** and that of the **male characters** in the film are neatly **combined** without breaking **narrative verisimilitude.** »

- « In contrast to **woman as icon**, the **active male figure** (the ego ideal of the identification process) **demand**s a **three-dimensional space** corresponding to that of the **mirror-recognition** in which the **alienated subject** **internalised his own representation** of this imaginary existence. [...] The **male protagonist** is **free to command the stage**, a stage of spatial illusion in which **he articulates the look and creates the action.** »

► **The Woman's to-be-looked-at-ness**

- « But in **psychoanalytic terms**, the **female figure** poses a deeper **problem**. She also connotes something that the **look continually circles** around but disavows: **her lack of a penis**, implying a **threat of castration** and hence **unpleasure.** [...] »

- The **male unconscious** has two avenues of **escape from this castration anxiety**: (1°) **preoccupation with the re-enactment of the original trauma** (investigating the woman, demystifying her mystery), counterbalanced by the devaluation, punishment or saving of the guilty object (an avenue typified by the concerns of the film noir); or else (2°) **complete disavowal of castration by the substitution of a fetish object or turning the represented figure itself into a fetish** so that it becomes reassuring rather than dangerous (hence over-valuation, the cult of the female star). »

-(2°) « This second avenue, **fetishistic scopophilia**, builds up the **physical beauty of the object**, transforming it into something **satisfying** in itself. (1°) The first avenue, **voyeurism**, on the contrary, has associations with **sadism**: **pleasure lies in ascertaining guilt** (immediately associated with castration), asserting control and subjecting the guilty person through punishment or forgiveness. This sadistic side fits in well with narrative. **Sadism demands a story**, depends on **making something happen, forcing a change** in another person, a **battle of will and strength**, victory/defeat, all occurring in a **linear time** with a **beginning** and an **end.** (2°) **Fetishistic scopophilia**, on the other hand, **can exist outside linear time** as the erotic instinct is **focused on the look alone.** These contradictions and ambiguities can be illustrated more simply by using works by **Hitchcock** and **Sternberg**, both of whom take the **look almost as the content or subject matter** of many of their films. **Hitchcock** is the more complex, as he **uses both mechanisms.** **Sternberg's work**, on the other hand, provides many pure examples of fetishistic scopophilia. »

► **Hitchcock's Male Hero through Mulvey's Eyes**

- « In **Hitchcock** [...] the **male hero** does **see precisely what the audience sees.** However, in the films I shall discuss here, he **takes fascination with an image** through **scopophilic eroticism** as the **subject of the film.** Moreover, in these cases the **hero portrays the contradictions and tensions** experienced by the **spectator.** In **Vertigo** in particular, but also in **Marnie** and **Rear Window**, the **look is central to the plot**, oscillating between **voyeurism** and **fetishistic fascination.** As a twist, a further **manipulation of the normal viewing process** which in some sense reveals it, Hitchcock uses the **process of identification** normally associated with **ideological correctness** and the recognition of **established morality** and shows up its **perverted side.** **Hitchcock has never concealed his interest in voyeurism, cinematic and non-cinematic.** His **heroes** are **exemplary of the symbolic order and the law** - a policeman (**Vertigo**), a dominant male possessing money and power (**Marnie**) - but their **erotic drives** lead them into **compromised situations.** The **power to subject another person** to the will sadistically or to he gaze voyeuristically is **turned on to the woman** as the **object of both.** **Power** is backed by (a) a **certainty of legal right** and (b) the **established guilt of the woman** (evoking castration, psychoanalytically speaking). True perversion is barely concealed under a shallow mask of ideological correctness--the **man is on the right side of the law, the woman on the wrong.** »

► **The Male Gaze in Rear Window**

« **Hitchcock's** (a) skillful use of **identification processes** and (b) liberal use of **subjective camera** from the **point of view of the male protagonist** draw the **spectators** deeply into his position, making them **share his uneasy gaze.** The **audience** is **absorbed into a voyeuristic situation** within the screen scene and **diegesis**

which parodies his own in the cinema. In his analysis of *Rear Window*, Douchet takes the film as a metaphor for the cinema. Jeffries is the audience, the events in the apartment block opposite correspond to the screen. As he watches, an erotic dimension is added to his look, a central image to the drama. His girlfriend Lisa had been of little sexual interest to him, more or less a drag, so long as she remained on the spectator side. When she crosses the barrier between his room and the block opposite, their relationship is re-born erotically. He does not merely (a) watch her through his lens, as a distant meaningful image, he also (b) sees her as a guilty intruder exposed by a dangerous man threatening her with punishment, and thus finally saves her. Lisa's exhibitionism has already been established by her obsessive interest in dress and style, in being a passive image of visual perfection; Jeffries' voyeurism and activity have also been established through his work as a photo-journalist, a maker of stories and captor of images. However, his enforced inactivity, binding him to his seat as a spectator, puts him squarely in the phantasy position of the cinema audience. »

► **The Problem of Looking in *Vertigo* and *Marnie***

« In *Vertigo*, subjective camera predominates. Apart from flash-back from Judy's point of view, the narrative is woven around what Scottie sees or fails to see.

I. The audience follows the growth of his erotic obsession and subsequent despair precisely from his point of view. Scottie's voyeurism is blatant: he falls in love with a woman he follows and spies on without speaking to. Its sadistic side is equally blatant: he has chosen (and freely chosen, for he had been a successful lawyer) to be a policeman, with all the attendant possibilities of pursuit and investigation. As a result, he follows, watches and falls in love with a perfect image of female beauty and mystery. Once he actually confronts her, his erotic drive is to break her down and force her to tell by persistent cross-questioning.

II. Then, in the second part of the film, he re-enacts his obsessive involvement with the image he loved to watch secretly. He reconstructs Judy as Madeleine, forces her to conform in every detail to the actual physical appearance of his fetish. Her exhibitionism, her masochism, make her an ideal passive counterpart to Scottie's active sadistic voyeurism. She knows her part is to perform, and only by playing it through and then replaying it can she keep Scottie's erotic interest. But in the repetition he does break her down and succeeds in exposing her guilt. His curiosity wins through and she is punished. In *Vertigo*, erotic involvement with the look is disorienting: the spectator's fascination is turned against him as the narrative carries him through and entwines him with the processes that he is himself exercising. The Hitchcock hero here is firmly placed within the symbolic order, in narrative terms. He has all the attributes of the patriarchal super-ego. Hence the spectator, lulled into a false sense of security by the apparent legality of his surrogate, sees through his look and finds himself exposed as complicit, caught in the moral ambiguity of looking. / Far from being simply an aside on the perversion of the police, *Vertigo* focuses on the implications of the active/looking, passive/looked-at split in terms of sexual difference and the power of the male symbolic encapsulated in the hero. *Marnie*, too, performs for Mark Rutland's gaze and masquerades as the perfect to-be-looked-at image. He, too, is on the side of the law until, drawn in by obsession with her guilt, her secret, he longs to see her in the act of committing a crime, make her confess and thus save her. So he, too, becomes complicit as he acts out the implications of his power. He controls money and words, he can have his cake and eat it. »

